

Steps to Your Health

For many years, South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs has partnered with USC School of Medicine in the *South Carolina Disability and Health Project* funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As part of this effort, *Steps to Your Health* was developed, field-tested, and evaluated to be effective in promoting wellness and preventing secondary debilitating conditions in people with intellectual disabilities. USC has also completed a formal efficacy trial of *Steps to Your Health*, with positive results.

Steps to Your Health is an evidenced-based wellness promotion program developed specifically for adults with intellectual disabilities, brain injury, and associated conditions. Its purpose is to promote healthy lifestyles in people with disabilities and prevent debilitating secondary conditions. A person's quality of life can be enhanced when good health is promoted and secondary conditions are avoided. Obesity, hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, depression, and insomnia are examples of debilitating secondary conditions that can be prevented. *Steps to Your Health* provides information about achieving and maintaining a healthier lifestyle, including good nutrition, preventing obesity and its complications, increasing exercise, dealing with stress, and improving communication.

Steps to Your Health is an eight week, small group instructional program with interactive lessons provided by a trained STYH Instructor. A *STYH Instructor Manual* and *STYH Participant Manual* are utilized. The goal is to develop healthy behaviors in participants through diet, regular exercise, and stress reduction. Short term expected outcomes include increasing participants' knowledge about health, learning strategies to promote optimum health, and developing healthy behaviors. Long range expected outcomes are improved health of participants, including increased energy, strength, and stamina, as well as prevention/improvement of secondary conditions.

South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs strongly endorses *Steps to Your Health* and other evidence-based wellness programs. *Steps to Your Health* should be made available to all persons served through SCDDSN. This program can be easily incorporated into local services, such as Residential Habilitation, Day Program options, Rehabilitation Supports, social and recreational activities, self-advocacy groups, and agency Quality Improvement plans. SCDDSN continues its collaboration with USC to make *STYH Instructor Training* available to provider agencies and other local organizations.

- Over **1000** people with disabilities have participated in *Steps to Your Health* since its inception in 1997, including **26** provider agencies
- **443** people with disabilities participated in the *STYH* efficacy study during 2006-2009
- In FY-2009, **11** *STYH Instructor Training* sessions were held, with **79** instructors trained
- In FY-2010, **3** *STYH Instructor Training* sessions were held, with **33** instructors trained
- **61** people with disabilities are currently participating in *STYH* (**6** provider agencies)